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## J. Milton Yinger

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The recipient of the first NCSA Distinguished Career Award is J. Milton Yinger. Milt Yinger's degrees were from DePauw University in Indiana (with a double major in sociology and economics), a masters at Louisiana State, and a Ph.D from University of Wisconsin.

Milt confesses that he actually missed some of his graduate seminar classes at LSU because he was busy with the Opera Chorus at the university. His major professor in sociology was not impressed!

At Wisconsin one of his peers and colleagues was C. Wright Mills—whom he describes a brilliant, angry, articulate, and driven.” He found the stimulation of Mills and other graduate students at U.W Madison exhilarating.

During his career, Milt contributed to (1) sociological theory, (2) sociology of religion, (3) race and ethnic relations, and (4) sociology of countercultures. Each area where he did work, he left a legacy.

Milt's Field Theory was one of the early attempts to move sociological theory toward a closer look at social process and at the dynamism of an organism within its complex environment. His book, toward a *Field Theory of Behavior* was an important contribution in the early 1960s, and in my judgement, we are the poorer because his theory has not been featured in recent theory texts.

In the Sociology of Religion, his book *The Scientific Study of Religion* was the gold standard of texts, and he opened doors to new ways of conceptualizing and measuring the essence of religiosity.

In the field of Racial and Ethnic Relations, he and Oberlin colleague George Simpson were awarded the Anfield Wolf Award for best scholarly work in 1958.

The notion of countercultures is especially interesting, since he quite literally coined the concept. His *American Sociological Review* article in 1960 was reprinted in 15 anthologies and translated into many languages. Actually, when he coined the concept, he used the word contraculture, and part of his interest was the way many religious groups serve as counterpoints to dominant social trends. But, he tells me, shortly after mailing off the manuscript he was telling his pre-teen daughter about this new idea. She responded, “Aw, Daddy, ‘contraculture’ doesn't sound right. You should have called it ‘counterculture.’” Milt added, this just goes to show that we ought to listen more closely to our children before we publish, for the media and sociologists obviously agreed with her.

Milt was President of the NCSA and held several elected positions in ASA. In fact, Milt is the only past President of NCAS to also be elected President of ASA. Further, Milt Yinger is the only person from any region of the country to be elected President of American Sociological Association while being employed at a teaching-oriented liberal arts college.

Milt is now 90 and is no longer able to travel, so he could not be here. But he remains the consummate scholar and teacher.

Let me end with some words of wisdom from Milt Yinger:

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Can the scholar be content with identifying key problems and seeking to understand them? In my judgment, no.

Values without knowledge are blind.  
Knowledge without values is empty.  
Both without policies are futile.

That credo unites the diverse elements in my scholarly and social action efforts.

Milt not only receives the first NCSA Distinguished Career Award, the Council has voted to henceforth name this award the J. Milton Yinger Distinguished Career Award. Thanks to Milt for his wisdom, his warm humanity, and his distinguished legacy to sociology.

Keith Roberts  
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